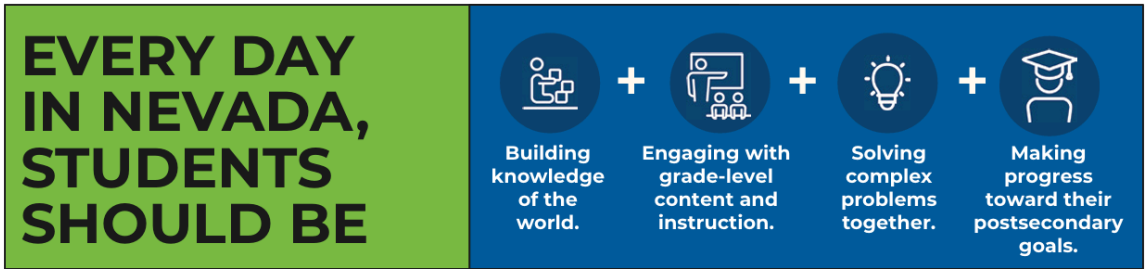
Superintendent Wakefield Year One Update: Building the Conditions for Lasting Improvement

One year ago, I stepped into the role of Nevada's State Superintendent of Public Instruction with a belief in our state's potential and a sense of urgency about the work ahead. Across Nevada, I've seen bright spots that demonstrate what's possible for students, alongside significant challenges that demand our attention. Our task is to make those successes more widespread and sustained.

As a state education agency, the Nevada Department of Education's ability to improve student outcomes depends on how effectively we support and influence the work happening in classrooms across Nevada. That requires four things: clear direction, strong connections to the field, the capacity to support implementation, and the credibility to establish expectations and follow through.

These four conditions—**clear, connected, capable, and credible**—have guided our work over the past year. I'm proud of the progress we've made in building this foundation and even more focused on putting these conditions to work to strengthen instruction, support schools and educators more effectively, and improve outcomes for Nevada's students.

The Nevada Department of Education's Vision



1. Clear: Establishing a Shared Direction

As a classroom teacher in a low-income community, I saw firsthand what students could achieve when they were provided the expectations, supports, and opportunities they deserved. That experience continues to shape my belief in what's possible for every Nevada student, especially those furthest from opportunity. When I interviewed with the State Board for this role last year, I saw that Nevada had no shortage of bright spots to build on. But sustained improvement at scale requires clear priorities and an accountable plan that aligns our efforts around what matters most.

- **Progress Made:** Informed by my statewide listening tour, we established a student-centered vision grounded in knowledge-building, rigorous learning, teamwork, and student agency. To translate that vision into action we set five strategic priorities and updated Nevada's Statewide Education Plan.
- **Looking Ahead:** Finalize the Statewide Education Plan with public feedback and intentional alignment with Governor-elect Ford's priorities. Move toward disciplined implementation with clear measures of progress and accountability for results.

NDE's Strategic Priorities



2. Connected: Building Relationships and Trust

At NDE we believe that we're in this together and that sustainable change depends on shared ownership. That is why I have traveled across the state listening to superintendents, trustees, teachers, and students. I have worked to make collaborative, two-way engagement the way NDE operates. Building trust requires more than listening and collaboration. It also means establishing shared priorities, setting clear expectations, and holding ourselves accountable for progress.

- **Progress Made:** Completed site visits to nearly every Nevada district, and increased collaboration through the Nevada Association of School Superintendents (NASS), Nevada Association of School Boards (NASB), NDE committees, Legislative commissions, community organizations, and teachers unions. Increased engagement has enabled NDE to increase strategic alignment with districts and resolve conflicts.
- **Looking Ahead:** Turn stronger relationships into coordinated action and more effective support for districts and schools. Use the Statewide Improvement Plan and Nevada's District Performance Framework to drive transparent conversations, celebrate progress, and address challenges together.

3. Capable: Strengthening Our Capacity to Deliver

The responsibility of state education agencies to provide leadership and support has never been more important as expectations for student outcomes rise and districts navigate increasingly complex challenges. That's why we're building an agency with the talent, expertise, systems, and partnerships to deliver meaningful support to districts and schools.

- **Progress Made:** We strengthened NDE's senior leadership team, aligned agency divisions and offices, and expanded strategic partnerships, including our SB 460 implementation partner Watershed Advisors who brings robust experience leading transformational change across Louisiana. Through our Talent and Leadership Initiative, funded by Opportunity 180, we launched a competitive Summer Impact Internship, welcoming seven educators who advanced key priorities in school funding, instructional materials, and early childhood education. We also welcomed three fellows and an executive-in-residence to strengthen agency capacity. Through three regional literacy summits, we began building a shared understanding of evidence-based literacy instruction and laying the groundwork for a statewide instructional vision.
- **Looking Ahead:** Translate NDE's realignment into more effective operations. Leverage the Talent and Leadership Initiative to meet immediate capacity needs and develop future leaders. Advance NDE's modernization through participation in the Hoover Institution's SEA Change initiative. Expand philanthropic and strategic partnerships to strengthen implementation and support for districts and schools.

4. Credible: Following Through on Our Commitments

At NDE we believe we are stewards of public trust. This commitment means we follow through, make difficult decisions, and are transparent about both progress and persistent challenges. We must hold ourselves to the same high expectations we set for districts and schools, demonstrating through our actions that state leadership can make a meaningful difference.

- **Progress made:** We focused heavily on SB 460 implementation, including implementing key literacy provisions, launching Nevada's first District Performance Framework to strengthen accountability, and supporting the success of Nevada's new Education Service Center. Through our Reporting Efficiency Initiative, we returned time to educators by suspending 16 obsolete reports and identified 89 of roughly 400 required reports for elimination, modification, or consolidation. We also secured an emergency regulation to stabilize district funding amid declining enrollment, helping prevent midyear staffing reductions and disruptions to student learning.
- **Looking Ahead:** Strengthen NDE's leadership in setting state education policy. Advance a focused legislative agenda and support the State Board of Education in their new legislative approach. Continue to use our authority and resources to address persistent challenges facing districts and schools.

This past year, we've focused on building the conditions for lasting improvement. The work ahead is to put those conditions to work by strengthening instruction, supporting schools and educators more effectively, and ultimately, improving outcomes for all Nevada students.

Dr. Victor Wakefield, Superintendent of Public Instruction

